

FOX AND HOUNDS

THE BRITISH SPORT SERIES

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Fox-hunting:
“Farrard Away.”

Painting by G. D. Armour.







FOX AND HOUNDS

BY
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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
G. DENHOLM ARMOUR

THE BRITISH
SPORT SERIES

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

FOX-HUNTING

‘FOX-HUNTING,’ wrote Beckford in 1787, ‘is now become the amusement of *gentlemen*: nor need any gentleman be ashamed of it.’

Time had been when fox-hunting and fox-hunters lay under social ban. Lord Chesterfield kindly bore testimony to the good intentions of him who followed the hounds, but could say little else in his favour: in the days of Queen Anne a ‘fox-hunter,’ in the esteem of some, meant a boor or something very like it; but the slighting significance attaching to the word must surely have become only a memory long ere Beckford wrote.

There is, however, room for doubt whether fox-hunting in its early days was the amusement of others than gentlemen, and whether any such were ever ashamed of it. William the Third hunted with the Charlton in Sussex, inviting thither foreign visitors of distinction; and Charlton continued to be the Melton of England in the days of Queen Anne and the two first Georges, for fox-hunting was the fashion. Harrier men maintain that their sport was reckoned the higher in these times; but, I venture to think, harrier men are mistaken. Read this,¹ dated 14th July 1730, from Sir Robert Walpole to the Earl of Carlisle:—

‘I am to acquaint your Lordship that upon the old Establishment of the Crown there have usually been a Master of the Buckhounds and a Master of

¹ Letters of Sir Robert Walpole, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*

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the Harriers. The first is now enjoyed by Colonel Negus ; the latter is vacant, and if your Lordship thinks it more agreeable to be Master of the Foxhounds the King has no objection to the style or name of the office ; but, as the Master of the Harriers is an ancient and known office, thinks it may be better if your Lordship takes the addition of Foxhounds, and the office to be called Master of Foxhounds and Harriers, which his Majesty is willing to grant to your Lordship with the salary of £2,000 for yourself, deputy, and all charges attending the same.'

Lord Carlisle would not have sought the title of M.F.H. had that of M.H. carried the greater consideration.

May it not be that eighteenth-century hare-hunting owes something of the prestige it has enjoyed in the eyes of posterity to William Somerville ? Might we not have seen fox-hunting in somewhat different light had that been the theme of *The Chace* ? Perhaps, unconsciously, we attach to the sport the supremacy that has never been denied the poem ; whereby fox-hunting, lacking a chronicler, is thrown out of its true perspective.

When the chronicler arrived, he was worthy of the office. This, his picture of a hunt,¹ shows him a hound man above all things :—

' . . . Now let your huntsman throw in his hounds as quietly as he can, and let the two whippers-in keep

¹ Beckford's frequent quotations from *The Chace* are omitted.

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wide of him on either side, so that a single hound may not escape them ; let them be attentive to his halloo, and be ready to encourage, or rate, as that directs ; he will, of course, draw up the wind, for reasons which I shall give in another place.—Now, if you can keep your brother sportsmen in order, and put any discretion into them, you are in luck ; they more frequently do harm than good : if it be possible, persuade those who wish to halloo the fox off, to stand quiet under the cover-side, and on no account to halloo him too soon ; if they do, he most certainly will turn back again : could you entice them all into the cover, your sport, in all probability, would not be the worse for it.

‘ How well the hounds spread the cover ! The huntsman you see, is quite deserted, and his horse, who so lately had a crowd at his heels, has not now one attendant left. How steadily they draw ! you hear not a single hound, yet none of them are idle. Is not this better than to be subject to continual disappointment from the eternal babbling of unsteady hounds ?

‘ How musical their tongues !—And as they get nearer to him how the chorus fills !—Hark ! he is found—Now, where are all your sorrows, and your cares, ye gloomy souls ! Or where your pains and aches, ye complaining ones ! one halloo has dispelled them all.—What a crash they make ! and echo seemingly takes pleasure to repeat the sound. The

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astonished traveller forsakes his road, lured by its melody ; the listening plowman now stops his plow ; and every distant shepherd neglects his flock, and runs to see him break.—What joy ; what eagerness in every face !

‘ Mark how he runs the cover’s utmost limits, yet dares not venture forth ; the hounds are still too near ! —That check is lucky !—Now, if our friends head him not, he will soon be off—hark ! they halloo : by G—d he’s gone ! Now, huntsman, get on with the head hounds ; the whipper-in will bring on the others after you : keep an attentive eye on the leading hounds, that, should the scent fail them, you may know at least how far they brought it. Mind *Galloper*, how he leads them !—It is difficult to distinguish which is first, they run in such a style ; yet he *is* the foremost hound.—The goodness of his nose is not less excellent than his speed :—how he carries the scent ! and when he loses it, see how eagerly he slings to recover it again !—There—now he’s at head again !—see how they top the hedge !—Now, how they mount the hill !—Observe what a head they carry, and shew me if thou canst, one shuffler or skirter amongst them all ; are they not like a parcel of brave fellows, who, when they engage in an undertaking, determine to share its fatigues and its dangers equally amongst them ? It was, then, the fox I saw as we came down the hill ;—those crows directed me which way to look, and the sheep ran from him as he passed along. The hounds are now on

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the very spot, yet the sheep stop them not, for they dash beyond them. Now see with what eagerness they cross the plain!—*Galloper* no longer keeps his place, *Brusher* takes it.—See how he slings for the scent, and how impetuously he runs! how eagerly he took the lead, and how he strives to keep it—yet *Victor* comes up apace.—He reaches him!—See what an excellent race it is between them!—It is doubtful which will reach the cover first.—How equally they run!—how eagerly they strain! Now *Victor*—*Victor*!—Ah! *Brusher*, you are beaten; *Victor* first tops the hedge.—See there! see how they all take it in their strokes! the hedge cracks with their weight, so many jump at once.

‘Now hastes the whipper-in to the other side of the cover; he is right unless he head the fox.

‘Listen! the hounds have turned. They are now in two parts: the fox has been headed back, and we have changed at last. Now, my lad, mind the huntsman’s halloo, and stop to those hounds which he encourages: He is right! that doubtless is the hunted fox.—Now they are off again. Ha! a check.—Now for a moment’s patience!—We press too close upon the hounds!—Huntsman, stand still! as they want you not.—How admirably they spread! how wide they cast! Is there a single hound that does not try? If there be, ne’er shall he hunt again. There, *Trueman* is on the scent—he feathers, yet still is doubtful—’tis right! How readily they join him! See those wide-casting

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hounds, how they fly forward to recover the ground they have lost!—Mind *Lightning*, how she dashes; and *Mungo*, how he works! Old *Frantic* too, now pushes forward; she knows as well as we the fox is sinking.

‘Huntsman! at fault at last? How far did you bring the scent?—Have the hounds made their own cast?—Now make yours. You see that sheep dog has coursed the fox:—get forward with your hounds and make a wide cast.

‘Hark! that halloo is indeed a lucky one.—If we can hold him on, we may yet recover him; for a fox so much distressed must stop at last. We shall now see if they will hunt as well as run; for there is but little scent, and the impending cloud still makes that little less. How they enjoy the scent!—See how busy they all are, and how each in his turn prevails. Huntsman! Huntsman! be quiet! Whilst the scent was good you pressed on your hounds: it was well done: when they came to a check you stood still and interrupted them not; they were afterwards at fault; you made your cast with judgment and lost no time. You now must let them hunt;—with such a cold scent as this you can do no good; they must do it all themselves; lift them now, and not a hound will stoop again.—Ha! a high road, at such a time as this, when the tenderest-nosed hound can hardly own the scent!—Another fault! That man at work there, has headed back the fox. Huntsman! cast not your hounds now, you see they have overrun the scent; have a little patience, and

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let them, for once, try back. We must now give them time ;—see where they bend towards yonder furze brake—I wish he may have stopped there!—Mind that old hound, how he dashes o'er the furze ; I think he winds him. Now for a fresh *entapis*! Hark! they halloo! Aye, there he goes. It is nearly over with him ; had the hounds caught view he must have died.—He will hardly reach the cover ; see how they gain upon him at every stroke! it is an admirable race! yet the cover saves him. Now be quiet and he cannot escape us ; we have the wind of the hounds and cannot be better placed :—how short he runs!—he is now in the very strongest part of the cover.—What a crash! every hound is in, and every hound is running for him. That was a quick turn! Again another!—he's put to his last shifts.—Now *Mischief* is at his heels, and death is not far off.—Ha! they stop all at once: all silent, and yet no earth is open. Listen! now they are at him again! Did you hear that hound catch him? They over-ran the scent, and the fox had laid down behind them. Now, Reynard, look to yourself! How quick they all give their tongues!—little *Dreadnought*, how he works him! the terriers too, they are now squeaking at him.—How close *Vengeance* persues! how terribly she presses!—it is just up with him! 'Gods! what a crash they make; the whole wood resounds!—That turn was very short!—There!—now!—aye, now they have him! Who—hoop!' . . .

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The practice of trailing up to the fox had been, by some Masters at least, abandoned at this time. Beckford drew a covert in the modern style, though he would have us at the covert-side by sunrise.

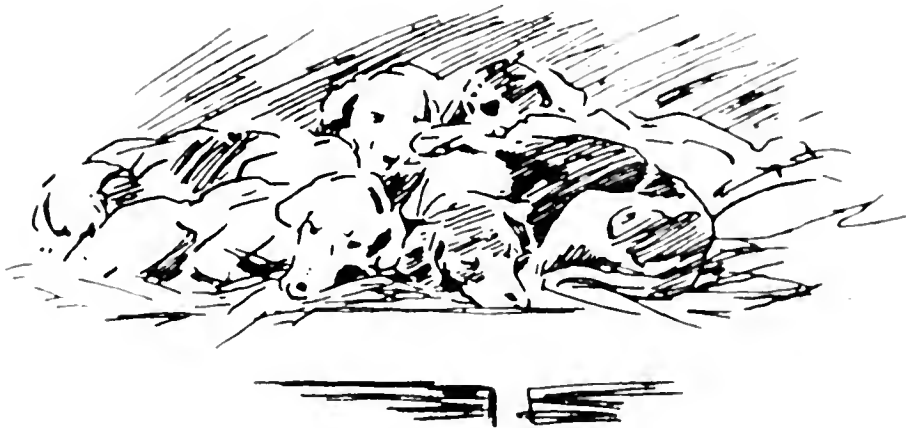
Colonel John Cook, Master of the Essex 1808-1813, suggests that the practice of meeting at sunrise was adopted with the definite purpose of hunting the fox before he was in running trim, or the slow hounds of an older generation would never have caught him.¹ However this may be, the system of meeting soon after sunrise and trailing up to the fox continued in the New Forest during the earlier years of the nineteenth century, and is still pursued by the fox-hunters of the Fells, and in Wales: and these latter do not find their foxes unable to run in the early morning. When Colonel Cook wrote, in 1829, the sunrise meet had been generally renounced: 'The breed of hounds, the feeding, and the whole system is so much improved that the majority of foxes are found and killed . . . after twelve o'clock.'

There was, it must be said, at least one among the improvements the Colonel did not regard as such: to wit, the second horse system, which by this time had been commonly adopted, no doubt as a result of the greater speed of hounds. It was introduced by Lord Sefton during his Mastership (1800-1802) of the

¹ They certainly required time to catch their fox on occasion: witness the famous Charlton run of 26th January, 1738: hounds found a vixen at 7.45 a.m. and killed her at 5.50 p.m., having covered a distance conscientiously affirmed to be 58 miles 2 furlongs 10 yards.

*Foxhounds,
Showing Rounded and
Unrounded Ear.*

Painting by G. D. Armour.





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Quorn. Lord Sefton was a heavy weight, but his example was speedily followed by those who had not burthen of flesh to excuse them.

The sporting ethics of a century ago were lenient on the subject of bagmen. It would seem from this note, culled from the *Sporting Magazine* of 1807, that if the owner of a pack wanted to hunt any particular district and foxes happened to be scarce therein, he might temporarily stock the country without reproach :—

‘ Mr. Fermor’s excellent pack is come, or coming at the end of this month (December), from his seat in Oxfordshire to Epsom, for the purpose of hunting there during the remainder of the season. The gentlemen of Surrey expect much sport, as Mr. Fermor will turn out a great number of bagged foxes.’

When Squire Osbaldeston hunted in Suffolk, season 1822-3, Mr. E. H. Budd used to buy half-grown foxes for him from Hopkins in Tottenham Court Road, at thirty shillings a brace, and send them down in a covered cart, ten or twelve brace at a time.

It was very usual to turn out a bagman for a day’s sport ; and such a fox often gave a much better run than the practice deserved. On 18th December 1805, the Master of the Chester Harriers had a bag fox turned out in Common Wood at a quarter-past twelve : he was given five minutes’ law, was run to ground at Pick Hill, was bolted, and thereafter stood up before hounds till dark, when ‘ hounds were called off by the

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New Mills near Whitchurch. The whole chase is computed to be upwards of forty miles as the crow flies, and with scarcely a check.' Mention of bag foxes recalls a comical story told of Tom Hills, the famous Old Surrey huntsman. He was carrying home, in the capacious pocket of his blouse, a fox he had been sent to buy in Leadenhall market. Stopped by a highwayman on Streatham Common, he responded to the demand for his money by bidding his assailant help himself from the pocket which contained the fox: and while the highwayman was bewailing his severely bitten fingers, Hills made his escape.

Long runs are frequently reported in the *Sporting Magazine* during the first decades of the nineteenth century. On Friday, 7th December 1804, Mr. Corbet's hounds found near Wellesbourne pastures, ran their fox for three hours with one five minutes' check, and killed—nay, 'most delightfully ran into' him at Weston, about a mile from Broadway: a sixteen-mile point. Of a field of nearly a hundred 'eager amateurs of fox-hunting,' fifteen were up or in view at the kill.

Nimrod's classic, best known as his 'Quarterly' essay, by reason of its publication in that Review in 1832, gives us as vivid and spirited a picture of fox-hunting as we could wish:—

' . . . Let us suppose ourselves to have been at Ashby Pasture, in the Quorn country, with Mr.

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Osbaldeston's hounds, in the year 1826, when that pack was at the height of its well-merited celebrity. Let us also indulge ourselves with a fine morning in the first week of February, and at least two hundred well-mounted men by the cover's side. Time being called—say a quarter past eleven, nearly our great-grandfathers' dinner hour—the hounds approach the furze-brake, or the gorse, as it is called in that region. “*Hark in, hark!*” with a slight cheer, and perhaps one wave of his cap, says Mr. Osbaldeston,¹ who long hunted his own pack, and in an instant he has not a hound at his horse's heels. In a very short time the gorse appears shaken in various parts of the cover—apparently from an unknown cause, not a single hound being for some minutes visible. Presently one or two appear, leaping over some old furze which they cannot push through, and exhibit to the field their glossy skins and spotted sides. “Oh, you beauties!” exclaims some old Meltonian, rapturously fond of the sport. Two minutes more elapse; another hound slips out of a cover, and takes a short turn outside, with his nose to the ground and his stern lashing his side—thinking, no doubt, he might touch on a drag, should Reynard have been abroad in the night. Hounds have no business to *think*, *thinks* the second whipper-in, who observes him; but one crack of his whip, with “Rasselas, Rasselas, where are you going, Rasselas? *Get to cover, Rasselas*”; and Rasselas

¹ Master from 1817 to 1821, and again from 1823 to 1827.

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immediately disappears. Five minutes more pass away. "No fox here," says one. "Don't be in a hurry," cries Mr. Cradock,¹ "they are drawing it beautifully, and there is rare lying in it." These words are scarcely uttered, when the cover shakes more than ever. Every stem appears alive, and it reminds us of a corn-field waving in the wind. In two minutes the sterns of some more hounds are seen flourishing above the gorse. "*Have at him there,*" holloas the Squire,² the gorse still more alive, and hounds leaping over each other's backs. "*Have at him there again,* my good hounds; a fox for a hundred!" reiterates the Squire, putting his finger in his ear and uttering a scream which, not being set to music, we cannot give here. Jack Stevens (the first whipper-in) looks at his watch. At this moment John White, Val. Maher, Frank Holyoake (who will pardon us for giving them their *noms-de-chasse*), and two or three more of the fast ones, are seen creeping gently on towards a point at which they think it probable he may break. "Hold hard there," says a sportsman; but he might as well speak to the winds. "Stand still, gentlemen; *pray* stand still," exclaims the huntsman; he might as well say so to the sun. During the time we have been speaking of, all the field have been awake—gloves put on—cigars thrown away—the

¹ This gentleman resided within the limits of the Quorn hunt, and kindly superintended the management of the covers. He has lately paid the debt of Nature.

² Mr. Osbaldeston was popularly called 'Squire' Osbaldeston.

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bridle-reins gathered well up into the hand, and hats pushed down upon the brow.

‘At this interesting period, a Snob, just arrived from a very *rural* country, and unknown to any one, but determined to witness the start, gets into a conspicuous situation: “Come away, sir!” holloas the Master (little suspecting that the Snob may be nothing less than one of the Quarterly Reviewers). “What mischief are you doing there? do you think *you* can catch the fox?” A breathless silence ensues. At length a whimper is heard in the cover—like the voice of a dog in a dream: it is *Flourisher*, and the Squire cheers him to the echo.

‘In an instant a hound challenges—and another—and another. ’Tis enough. “*Tally-ho!*” cries a countryman in a tree. “He’s gone,” exclaims Lord Albanley; and, clapping his spurs to his horse, in an instant is in the front rank.

‘As all good sportsmen would say, “’Ware, hounds!” cries Sir Harry Goodricke. “Give them time,” exclaims Mr. John Moore. “That’s right,” says Mr. Osbaldeston, “spoil your own sport as usual.” “*Go along,*” roars out Mr. Holyoake, “there are three couple of hounds on the scent.” “That’s your sort,” says “Billy Coke,”¹ coming up at the rate of thirty miles an hour on Advance, with a label pinned on his back “SHE KICKS”; “the rest are all coming, and there’s a rare scent to-day, I’m sure.”

Said to be the designer of the ‘billy-cock’ hat.

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'Bonaparte's Old Guard in its best days, would not have stopped such men as these, so long as life remained in them. Only those who have witnessed it can know in what an extraordinary manner hounds that are left behind in a cover make their way through a crowd, and get up to leading ones of a pack, which have been fortunate in getting away with their fox. It is true they possess the speed of a race-horse; still, nothing short of their high mettle could induce them to thread their way through a body of horsemen going the best pace with the prospect of being ridden over and maimed at every stride they take. But, as Beckford observes, "'Tis the dash of the foxhound which distinguishes him." A turn, however, in their favour, or a momentary loss of scent in the few hounds that have shot ahead—an occurrence to be looked for on such occasions—joins head and tail together, and the scent being good, every hound settles to his fox; the pace gradually improves; *vires acquirit eundo*; *a terrible burst is the result!*

'At the end of nineteen minutes the hounds come to a fault, and for a moment the fox has a chance; in fact, they have been pressed upon by the horses, and have rather over-run the scent. "What a pity," says one. "What a shame!" cries another; alluding, perhaps to a young one, who would and could have gone still faster. "You may thank yourselves for this," exclaims Osbaldeston, well up at the time, Ashton¹

¹ Mr. Osbaldeston sold Ashton to Lord Plymouth for four hundred guineas after having ridden him six seasons

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looking fresh; but only fourteen men out of the two hundred are to be counted; all the rest are *coming*. At one blast of the horn the hounds are back to the point at which the scent has failed, Jack Stevens being in his place to turn them. “*Yo doit ! Pastime !*” says the Squire, as she feathers her stern down the hedge-row, looking more beautiful than ever. She speaks ! “Worth a thousand, by Jupiter !” cries John White, looking over his left shoulder as he sends both spurs into Euxton, delighted to see only four more of the field are up. Our Snob, however, is amongst them. “He has gone a good one,” and his countenance is expressive of delight, as he urges his horse to his speed to get again into a front place.

‘The pencil of the painter is now wanting; and unless the painter should be a sportsman, even his pencil would be worth little. What a country is before him !—what a panorama does it represent ! not a field of less than forty—some a hundred acres—and no more signs of the plough than in the wilds of Siberia. See the hounds in a body that might be covered by a damask table-cloth—every stern down, and every head up, for there is no need of stooping, the scent lying breast-high. But the crash !—the music !—how to describe these ? Reader, there is no crash now, and not much music. It is the tinker that makes great noise over a little work, but at the pace these hounds are going there is no time for babbling. Perchance one hound in five may throw his tongue as he

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goes to inform his comrades, as it were, that the villain is on before them, and most musically do the light notes of *Vocal* and *Venus* fall on the ear of those who may be within reach to catch them. But who is so fortunate in this second burst, nearly as terrible as the first? Our fancy supplies us again, and we think we could name them all. If we look to the left, nearly abreast of the pack, we see six men going gallantly, and quite as straight as the hounds themselves are going; and on the right are four more, riding equally well, though the former have rather the best of it, owing to having had the inside of the hounds at the last two turns, which must be placed to the chapter of accidents. A short way in the rear, by no means too much so to enjoy this brilliant run, are the rest of the *élite* of the field, who had come up at the first check; and a few who, thanks to the goodness of their steeds, and their determination to be with the hounds, appear as if dropped from the clouds. Some however, begin to show symptoms of distress. Two horses are seen loose in the distance—a report is flying about that one of the field is badly hurt, and something is heard of a collar-bone being broken, others say it is a leg; but the pace is *too good* to enquire. A cracking of rails is now heard, and one gentleman's horse is to be seen resting, nearly balanced, across one of them, his rider being on his back in the ditch, which is on the landing side. “Who is he?” says Lord Brudenel¹

¹ Afterwards Lord Cardigan.

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to Jack Stevens. "Can't tell, my Lord ; but I thought it was a queerish place when I came over it before him." It is evidently a case of peril, but the pace is *too good* to afford help.

'Up to this time Snob has gone quite in the first flight ; the "dons" begin to eye him, and when an opportunity offers, the question is asked, "Who is that fellow on the little bay horse?" "Don't know him," says Mr. *Little* Gilmour (a fourteen-stone Scotchman, by-the-by), ganging gallantly to his hounds. "He can ride," exclaims Lord Raneliffe. "A tip-top provincial, depend upon it," added Lord Plymouth, going quite at his ease on a thorough-bred nag, three stone above his weight and in perfect racing trim. Animal nature, however, will cry "enough," how good so ever she may be, if unreasonable man press her beyond the point. The line of scent lies right athwart a large grass ground (as a field is termed in Leicestershire), somewhat on the ascent ; abounding in ant hills, or hillocks, peculiar to old grazing land, and thrown up by the plough some hundreds of years since, into rather high ridges, with deep holding furrows between each. The fence at the top is impracticable—Meltonicè, "a stopper" ; nothing for it but a gate, leading into a broad green lane, high and strong, with deep slippery ground on each side of it. "Now for the timber-jumper," cries Osbaldeston, pleased to find himself upon Ashton. "For heaven's sake take care of my hounds, in case they may throw

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up in the lane." Snob is here in the best of company, and that moment perhaps the happiest of his life ; but not satisfied with his situation, wishing to out-Herod Herod, and to have a fine story to tell when he gets home, he pushes to his speed on ground on which all regular Leicestershire men are careful, and the death-warrant of the little bay horse is signed. It is true he gets first to the gate, and has no idea of opening it ; sees it contains five new and strong bars, that will neither bend nor break ; has a great idea of a fall, but no idea of refusing ; presses his hat firmly on his head, and gets his whip-hand at liberty to give the good little nag a refresher ; but all at once perceives it will not do. When attempting to collect him for the effort, he finds his mouth dead and his neck stiff ; fancies he hears something like a wheezing in his throat ; and discovers quite unexpectedly that the gate would open, wisely avoids a fall, which was *booked* had he attempted to leap it. He pulls up then at the gate ; and as he places the hook of his whip under the latch, John White goes over it close to the hinge-post, and Captain Ross upon Clinker, follows him. The Reviewer then walks through.

'The scene now shifts. On the other side of the lane is a fence of this description : it is a newly plashed hedge, abounding in strong growers, as they are called, and a yawning ditch on the further side ; but, as is peculiar to Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, a considerable portion of the blackthorn, left uncut,

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leans outward from the hedge, somewhat about breast high. This large fence is taken by all now with the hounds—some to the right and some to the left of the direct line; but the little bay horse would have no more of it. Snob puts him twice at it, and manfully too; but the wind is out of him, and he has no power to rise. Several scrambles, but only one fall, occur at this rasper, all having enough of the killing pace; and a mile and a half further, the second horses are fallen in with, just in the nick of time. A short check from the stain of sheep makes everything comfortable; and, the Squire having hit off his fox like a workman, thirteen men out of two hundred, are fresh mounted, and with the hounds, which settle to the scent again at a truly killing pace.

““Hold hard, Holyoake!” exclaims Mr. Osbaldeston (now mounted on Clasher), knowing what double-quick time he would be marching to, with fresh pipes to play upon, and the crowd well shaken off; “*pray* don’t press ’em too hard, and we shall be sure to kill our fox.¹ *Have at him there, Abigail and Fickle*, good bitches—see what a head they are carrying! I’ll bet a thousand they kill him.” The country appears better and better. “He’s taking a capital line,” exclaims Sir Harry Goodricke, as he points out to Sir James Musgrave two young Furrier hounds, who are particularly distinguishing themselves at the moment. “Worth

¹ One peculiar excellence in Mr. Osbaldeston’s hounds was their steadiness under pressure by the crowd.

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a dozen Reform Bills," shouts Sir Francis Burdett,¹ sitting erect upon Sampson,² and putting his head straight at a yawner. "We shall have the Whissendine brook," cries Mr. Maher, who knows every field in the country, for he is making straight for Teigh." "And a bumper too, after last night's rain," holloas Captain Berkeley, determined to get first to four stiff rails in a corner. "So much the better," says Lord Alvanley, "I like a bumper at all times." "A fig for the Whissendine," cries Lord Gardner; "I am on the best water-jumper in my stable."

'The prophecy turns up. Having skirted Ranksborough gorse, the villain has nowhere to stop short of Woodwell-head cover, which he is pointing for; and in ten minutes, or less, the brook appears in view. It is even with its banks, and as

"Smooth glides the water where the brook is deep."

its deepness was pretty certain to be fathomed. "Yooi, OVER he goes!" holloas the Squire, as he perceives Joker and Jewell plunging into the stream, and Red-rose shaking herself on the opposite bank. Seven men out of thirteen take it in their stride; three stop short, their horses refusing the first time, but come well over the second; and three find themselves in the middle of

¹ Sir Francis Burdett, M.P. for Westminster 1807-1837, was prominent among the organisers of the 'Hampden Clubs,' founded in 1816 and after, for parliamentary reform. He was twice imprisoned on political charges, in 1810 and 1820.

² A favourite hunter of the baronet's which he once honoured by coming all the way from London to Melton to ride *one* day with hounds.

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it. The gallant Frank Forester is among the latter ; and having been requested that morning to wear a friend's new red coat, to take off the gloss and glare of the shop, he accomplishes the task to perfection in the bluish-black mud 'of the Whissendine, only then subsiding after a three days' flood. "Who is that under his horse in the brook?" inquires that good sportsman and fine rider, Mr. Green of Rolleston, whose noted old mare has just skimmed over the water like a swallow on a summer's evening. "It's Middleton Biddulph," says one. "Pardon me," cries Mr. Middleton Biddulph ; "Middleton Biddulph is here, *and here he means to be!*" "Only Dick Christian," answers Lord Forester, "and it is nothing new to him."¹ "But he'll be drowned," exclaims Lord Kinaird. "I shouldn't wonder," observes Mr. William Coke. But the pace is *too good* to enquire.'

Such was fox-hunting in Leicestershire in the days of William the Fourth. Multiply the number of the field by three or four, stir in references to railways, ladies, and perhaps to an overlooked strand of wire, and the story might stand as of to-day.

Wire began to come into use in the late 'fifties : in 1862 the Atherstone country was dangerously wired : in 1863-1864 Mr. Tailby's was so much wired that special endeavours were successfully made to remove it. Barbed wire was first used in England in 1882.

¹ 'Talk of tumbles! I have had eleven in one day down there [Melton] when I was above seventy'—*Dick Christian's Lectures*, see *Post and Paddock* by 'The Druid.'

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Here are, epitomised, some of the great runs of the last eighty years:—

17th March 1837.—Mr. Delmé Radcliffe's Wenderover Run. Found at Kensworth at half-past two, ran their fox to Hampden and lost him at dusk: 2 hours 35 minutes: 18½ miles point to point. 26 as hounds ran. Fox found dead in a rick yard next morning.

9th February 1849.—The Old Findon (Surrey). Ran their fox 45 miles in 4 hours 50 minutes: last 22 miles nearly straight: killed in Dorking Glory, Surrey.

2nd February 1866.—The Pytchley, Waterloo Run. Found in Waterloo Gorse at five minutes past two, ran to Blatston: 3 hours 45 minutes: whipped off in the dark at 5.30. 13 couples of hounds up of 17½ out.¹

3rd February 1868.—The Meynell, Radbourne Run. Found in the Rough: fast but erratic run to near Biggin, 3 hours 37 minutes: 36 miles: fox believed to have been knocked over when dead beat by a farmer.

22nd February 1871.—Duke of Beaufort's Greatwood Run. Found Grettenham Great Wood: marked to the ground on Swindon side of Highworth: 14 miles point to point: 28 miles as hounds ran. 3 hours 30 minutes.

¹Mr. Robert Fellowes, who rode in this run, thinks it much overrated: 'hounds were continually changing foxes and were never near catching one of them. It was only a journey.'

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16th February 1872.—Mr. Chaworth Musters's Harlequin Run. Found in the Harlequin Gorse, Ratcliffe-on-Trent: ran very straight to Hoton Spinney and back to beyond Kinmoulton Woods. Killed. Over 35 miles: 3 hours 26 minutes. 15½ couples of hounds up of 17½ out.

9th February 1881.—Mr. Rolleston's Lowdham Run. Found in Halloughton Wood: ran 16 miles to Eakring Brales: 12 mile point, gave up at dusk: very fast all the way, but time not recorded. Dead fox found in Eakring Brales two days after.

1st December 1888.—The Grafton, Brafield Run. Found in Brafield Furze on Mr. Christopher Smythe's property: ran perfectly straight for 8 miles: turned left-handed and killed after another 50 minutes' fast hunting. Every hound up.

14th December 1894.—The Quorn, Barkby Holt Run. Found in Barkby Holt: 27 miles in 2 hours 5 minutes to ground in Bolt Wood. Grass all the way: very fast: horses stopping in every field.

2nd January 1899.—The Craven Sydmonton Run. Found in Sydmonton Big Wood. Hounds stopped at Tubbs Copse near Bramley Station. 10 miles point to point: 20 miles as hounds ran. First ten miles so fast nobody could get near hounds.

27th March 1903.—The Quorn Barkby Holt Run. 12 miles to just short of Oakham Pastures. Killed.

It is the exception rather than the rule for one

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of these long runs to end with a kill. The fact that six out of the eleven occurred in February will be remarked.

These are some of the strange places wherein foxes have been killed or left:—On the house-keeper's bed upstairs, Catas Farm, near Heather, Leicestershire : late in October or early in November 1864 (clubbed while asleep by a waggoner). Kitchen of a builder at Wetherby, Bramham Moor, killed 31st May 1875. In Mr. Fernie's country : took refuge beside a ploughman and his team, November 1899. Killed in Broughton Astley Church, near Leicester, while congregation assembling, Friday, 12th August 1900. Down farmhouse chimney from the roof : fire raked out, and left by Essex and Suffolk, 26th December 1903. Mineral water factory : employés usurped function of hounds and lost : Atherstone, March 1904.

The height from which a fox can drop without hurting himself is extraordinary. Foxes often seek refuge in trees,¹ and if disturbed drop to ground without hesitation. The greatest drop of which I have record occurred on the 19th February 1886 in the Blackmore Vale country. The second whipper-in ascended the slightly slanting elm up which the fox, helped by ivy, had climbed. The fox eventually went nearly to the top, and

¹ This trait seems to be of modern development. I have found no mention of tree-climbing foxes in the records of a century back.

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as it was thought he must fall and be killed when he tried to get down, he was dislodged. He dropped a distance of forty-four feet, falling on his nose and chest, but stood up before hounds for two miles before they killed him.

When we consider how closely the country is hunted, it is not wonderful that packs should occasionally clash. On 3rd April 1877 Lord Galway's, on their way to draw Maltby Wood, after a morning run, hit off the line of a fox: he showed signs of being beaten, and they killed him after a comparatively short burst. While breaking him up Lord Fitzwilliam's hounds came up: Lord Galway's had 'cut in' and killed the fox they were hunting.

The average weight of the fox is put at from 11 to 14 lbs.: of a vixen, 9 to 12 lbs. All the heaviest foxes recorded have been fell foxes: the biggest actually weighed was killed by the Ullswater on Cross Fell Range: 23 lbs., four feet four inches from tip to tip: date not given. In March 1874 Mr. F. Chapman weighed alive a bagman turned out at Palmer Flat, Aysgarth, Yorkshire, 21 lbs. On 13th December 1877 the Melbrake killed two foxes, $20\frac{1}{4}$ and $18\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. On 4th January 1878 the Sinnington killed a $19\frac{1}{2}$ lb. fox. The fox that was too heavy for 20 lb. scale but was estimated to weigh 26 lbs., must be regretfully omitted from the list.

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As I write comes one having pretty talent for conundrums, to ask when the practice of rounding the ears of hounds came into use. The question is difficult to answer. The few hound pictures of Francis Barlow (b. 1626, dec. 1702) show no rounded ears: the many pictures of John Wootton (b. *circa* 1685, dec. 1765) show ears rounded, but in less degree than at a later date, but also ears in the natural state. In his 'Death of the Fox' some of the hounds are rounded and some are not: in his 'Portraits of Hounds' three are rounded and one is not. Unfortunately none of these works are dated. Stephen Elmer's portrait of Mr. Corbet's *Trojan*, entered 1780, shows ears closely rounded. In the engravings from Wootton's works some hounds' ears seem to be cut to a point; 'peaked' would describe the shape; but I have never seen any reference in early hunting books to this or any other method of cutting the ears. Peaking would answer much the same purpose as rounding, an operation now not universally practised.

Is there anything in the literature of the chase more delightful than this from Charles Kingsley's 'My Winter Garden'?¹

' . . . Stay. There was a sound at last; a light footfall. A hare races towards us, through the ferns, her great bright eyes full of terror, her ears aloft to catch some sound behind. She

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, April 1858.

Fox-hunting:
The Vale.

Painting by G. D. Armour.





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sees us, turns short, and vanishes into the gloom. The mare pricks up her ears too, listens, and looks: but not the way the hare has gone. There is something more coming; I can trust the finer sense of the horse, to which (and no wonder) the Middle Ages attributed the power of seeing ghosts and fairies impalpable to man's gross eyes. Besides, that hare was not travelling in search of food. She was not "loping" along, looking around her right and left, but galloping steadily. She has been frightened, she has been put up: but what has put her up? And there, far away among the fir-stems, rings the shriek of a startled blackbird. What has put him up? That, old mare, at sight whereof your wise eyes widen until they are ready to burst, and your ears are first shot forward toward your nose, and then laid back with vicious intent. Stand still, old woman! Do you think still, after fifteen winters, that you can catch a fox? A fox, it is indeed; a great dog-fox, as red as the fir-stems between which he glides. And yet his legs are black with fresh peat stains. He is a hunted fox: but he has not been up long. The mare stands like a statue: but I can feel her trembling between my knees. Positively he does not see us. He sits down in the middle of a ride, turns his great ears right and left, and then scratches one of them with his hind foot, seemingly to make it hear the better. Now he is off again and on.

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‘Beneath yon firs, some hundred yards away, standeth, or rather lieth, for it is on dead flat ground, the famous castle of Malepartus, which beheld the base murder of Lampe, the hare, and many a seely soul beside. I know it well: a patch of sand heaps, mingled with great holes, amid the twining fir roots; ancient home of the last of the wild beasts.

‘And thither, unto Malepartus safe and strong, trots Reinecke, where he hopes to be snug among the labyrinthine windings, and innumerable starting-holes, as the old apologue has it, of his ballium, covert-way and donjon keep.

‘Full blown in self-satisfaction he trots, lifting his toes delicately, and carrying his brush aloft, as full of cunning and conceit as that world-famous ancestor of his, whose deeds of unchivalry were the delight, if not the model, of knight and kaiser, lady and burgher, in the Middle Age.

‘Suddenly he halts at the great gate of Malepartus; examines it with his nose, goes on to a postern; examines that also, and then another and another; while I perceive afar, projecting from every cave’s mouth, the red and green end of a new fir-faggot. Ah! Reinecke! fallen is thy conceit, and fallen thy tail therewith. Thou hast worse foes to deal with than Bruin the bear, and Isegrim the wolf, or any foolish brute whom thy great ancestor outwitted. Man, the many-counselled, has

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been beforehand with thee; and the earths are stopped.

‘One moment he sits down to meditate, and scratches those trusty counsellors, his ears, as if he would tear them off, “revolving swift thoughts in a crafty mind.” He has settled it now. He is up and off—and at what a pace! Out of the way, Fauns and Hamadryads, if any be left in the forest. What a pace! And with what a grace beside!

‘Oh Reinecke, beautiful thou art, of a surety, in spite of thy great naughtiness. Art thou some fallen spirit, doomed to be hunted for thy sins in this life, and in some future life rewarded for thy swiftness, and grace, and cunning by being made a very messenger of immortals? Who knows? Not I. I am rising fast to Pistol’s vein. Shall I ejaculate? Shall I notify? Shall I awaken the echoes? Shall I break the grand silence by that scream which the vulgar view-halloo call? It is needless; for louder and louder every moment swells up a sound which makes my heart leap into my mouth, and my mare into the air. . . .

‘Music! Well-beloved soul of Hullah, would that thou wert here this day, and not in St. Martin’s Hall, to hear that chorus, as it pours round the fir-stems, rings against the roof above, shatters up into a hundred echoes, till the air is live with sound! You love Madrigals, or what-

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ever Weelkes, or Wilbye, or Orlando Gibbons sang of old. So do I. Theirs is music fit for men: worthy of the age of heroes, of Drake and Raleigh, Spenser and Shakespeare; but oh, that you could hear this madrigal! If you must have "four parts," then there they are. Deep-mouthed bass, rolling along the ground; rich joyful tenor: wild wistful alto; and leaping up here and there above the throng of sounds, delicate treble shrieks and trills of trembling joy. I know not whether you can fit it into your laws of music, any more than you can the song of that Ariel sprite who dwells in the Eolian harp, or the roar of the waves on the rock, or

"Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
and murmur of innumerable bees."

But music it is. A madrigal? Rather a whole opera of *Der Freischütz*—dæmonic element and all—to judge by those red lips, fierce eyes, wild hungry voices; and such as should make Reinecke, had he strong æsthetic sympathies, well content to be hunted from his cradle to his grave, that such sweet sounds might by him enrich the air. Heroes of old were glad to die if but some "vates sacer" would sing their fame in worthy strains: and shalt not thou too be glad, Reinecke? Content thyself with thy fate. Music soothes care: let it soothe thine, as thou runnest for thy life; thou

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shalt have enough of it in the next hour. For as the Etruscans (says Athenæus) were so luxurious that they used to flog their slaves to the sound of the flute, so shall luxurious *Chanter* and *Challenger*, *Sweet-lips* and *Melody*, eat thee to the sound of rich organ-pipes, that so thou mayest

“Like that old fabled swan, in music die.”

‘And now appear, dim at first and distant, but brightening and nearing fast, many a right good fellow and many a right good horse. I know three out of the four of them, their private histories, the private histories of their horses; and could tell you many a good story of them: but shall not, being an English gentleman, and not an American *littérateur*. They are not very clever, or very learned or very anything, except gallant men: but they are good enough company for me, or any one; and each has his own *spécialité*, for which I like him. That huntsman I have known for fifteen years, and sat many an hour beside his father’s deathbed. I am a godfather to that whip’s child. I have seen the servants of the hunt, as I have seen the hounds grow up round me for two generations, and I look on them as old friends, and like to look into their brave, honest, weather-beaten faces. That red coat there, I knew him when he was a school-boy; and now he is a captain in the guards, and won his Victoria Cross at Inkermann:

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that bright green coat is the best farmer, as well as the hardest rider for many a mile round; one who plays, as he works, with all his might, and might have made a *beau sabreur* and colonel of dragoons. So might that black coat, who now brews good beer, and stands up for the poor at the Board of Guardians, and rides, like the green coat, as well as he works. That other black coat is a county banker: but he knows more of the fox than the fox knows of himself, and where the hounds are there will he be this day. That red coat has hunted kangaroo in Australia; that one has—but what matter to you who each man is? Enough that each can tell me a good story, welcome me cheerfully, and give me out here, in the wild forest, the wholesome feeling of being at home among friends.

‘And am I going with them?’

‘Certainly. He who falls in with hounds running and follows them not as far as he can (business permitting of course, in a business country) is either more or less than man. So I who am neither more nor less, but simply a man like my neighbours, turn my horse’s head to go.

‘There is music again, if you will listen, in the soft tread of those hundred horse-hoofs upon the spongy vegetable soil. They are trotting now in “common time.” You may hear the whole Croats’ March (the finest trotting march in the world),

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played by those iron heels ; the time, as it does in the Croats' March, breaking now and then, plunging, jingling, struggling through heavy ground, bursting for a moment into a jubilant canter, as it reaches a sound spot. . . .

'But that time does not last long. The hounds feather a moment round Malepartus, puzzled by the windings of Reinecke's footsteps. Look at *Virginal*, five yards ahead of the rest, as her stern flourishes, and her pace quickens. Hark to *Virginal* ! as after one whimper, she bursts out full-mouthed, and the rest dash up and away in chorus, madder than ever, and we after them up the ride. Listen to the hoof-tune now. The common time is changed to triple ; and the heavy steady thud—thud—thud—tells one even blindfold that we are going. . . .

'Going, and "going to go." For a mile of ride have I galloped tangled among men and horses, and cheered by occasional glimpses of the white-spotted backs in front ; and every minute the pace quickens. Now the hounds swing off the ride, and through the fir trees ; and now it shall be seen who can ride the winter-garden.

'I make no comparisons. I feel due respect for "the counties." I have tasted of old, though sparingly, the joys of grass ; but this I do say, as said the gentlemen of the New Forest fifty years ago, in the days of its glory, when the forest and

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the court were one, that a man may be able to ride in Leicestershire, and yet not able to ride in the forest. It is one thing to race over grass, light or heavy, seeing a mile ahead of you, and coming up to a fence which, however huge, is honest, and another to ride where we are going now.

‘If you will pay money enough for your horses; if you will keep them in racing condition; and having done so simply stick on (being of course a valiant man and true), then you can ride grass, and

“Drink delight of battle with your peers,”

or those of the realm in Leicestershire, Rutland, or Northampton. But here more is wanted, and yet not so much. Not so much, because the pace is seldom as great; but more, because you are in continual petty danger, requiring continued thought, promptitude, experience. There it is the best horse who wins; but here it is the shrewdest man. Therefore, let him who is fearful and faint-hearted keep to the rides; and not only he but he who has a hot horse; he who has no hand; he who has no heel, or a horse who knows not what heel means; for this riding is more like Australian bush-coursing, or Bombay hog-hunting, than the pursuit of the wily animal over a civilized country, as it appears in Leech’s inimitable caricatures. . . .

‘. . . Racing, indeed; for as Reinecke gallops up the narrow heather-fringed pathway, he brushes off

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his scent upon the twigs at every stride, and the hounds race after him, showing no head indeed, and keeping, for convenience, in one long line upon the track, but going, head up, sterns down, at a pace which no horse can follow.—I only hope they may not overrun the scent.

‘They have overrun it; halt, and put their heads down a moment. But with one swift cast in full gallop they have hit it off again, fifty yards away in the heather, long ere we are up to them; for those hounds can hunt a fox because they are not hunted themselves, and so have learnt to trust themselves; as boys should learn at school, even at the risk of a mistake or two. Now they are showing head indeed, down a half cleared valley, and over a few ineffectual turnips, withering in the peat, a patch of growing civilization in the heart of the wilderness; and then over the brook—woe’s me! and we must follow—if we can.

‘Down we come to it, over a broad sheet of burnt ground, where a week ago the young firs were blazing, crackling, spitting turpentine for a mile on end. Now it lies all black and ghastly, with hard charred stumps, like ugly teeth, or caltrops of old, set to lame charging knights.

‘Over a stiff furze-grown bank, which one has to jump on and off—if one can; and over the turnip patch, breathless.

‘Now we are at the brook, dyke, lode, drain,

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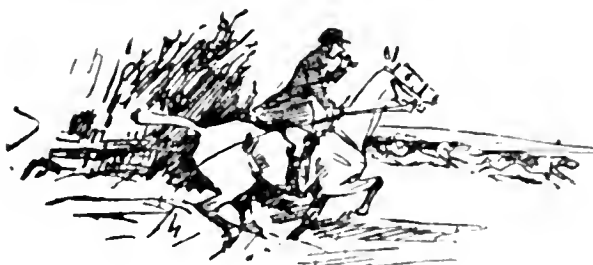
or whatever you call it. Much as I value agricultural improvements, I wish its making had been postponed for at least this one year.

‘Shall we race at it, as at Rosy or Wissendine, and so over in one long stride? Would that we could! But racing at it is impossible; for we stagger up to it almost knee-deep of newly-cut yellow clay, with a foul runnel at the bottom. The brave green coat finds a practicable place, our Master another; and both jump, not over, but in; and then out again, not by a leap, but by clawings as of a gigantic cat. The second whip goes in before me, and somehow vanishes headlong. I see the water shoot up from under his shoulders full ten feet high, and his horse sitting disconsolate on his tail at the bottom, like a great dog. However they are up again and out, painted of a fair raw-ochre hue; and I have to follow in fear and trembling, expecting to be painted in like wise.

‘Well, I am in and out again, I don’t know how: but this I know that I am in a great bog. Natural bogs, red, brown or green, I know from childhood, and never was taken in by one in my life; but this has taken me in, in all senses. Why do people pare and trim bogs before draining them?—thus destroying the light coat of tenacious stuff on the top, which Nature put there on purpose to help poor horsemen over, and the blanket of

*Fox-hunting :
Jumping the Brook.*

Painting by G. D. Armour.





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red bog-moss, which is meant as a fair warning to all who know the winter-garden.

‘However I am no worse off than my neighbours. Here we are, ten valiant men, all bogged together; and who knows how deep the peat may be?’

“I jump off and lead, considering that a horse plus a man weighs more than a horse alone; so do one or two more. The rest plunge bravely on, whether because of their hurry, or like Child Waters in the Ballad, “for fying of their feet.”

‘However “all things do end,” as Caryl pithily remarks somewhere in his *French Revolution*; and so does this bog. I wish this gallop would end too. How long have we been going? There is no time to take out a watch; but I fancy the mare flags: I am sure my back aches with standing in my stirrups. I become desponding. I am sure I shall never see this fox killed; sure I shall not keep up five minutes longer; sure I shall have a fall soon; sure I shall ruin the mare’s fetlocks in the ruts. I am bored. I wish it was all over, and I safe at home in bed. Then why do I not stop? I cannot tell. That thud, thud, thud, through moss and mire has become an element of my being, a temporary necessity, and go I must. I do not ride the mare; the Wild Huntsman, invisible to me, rides her; and I, like Bürger’s *Lenore*, am carried on in spite of myself, “tramp, tramp, along the land, splash, splash, along the sea.”’

COURSING

LET us pass over the early history of coursing. We know that Arrian wrote of the sport in the second century, that King John accepted greyhounds in lieu of cash for renewing crown tenures in the thirteenth, that that all-round sportsman, Henry VIII., allowed twenty-four loaves a day for his grey hounds, and that Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, bestowed his approval on the first code of coursing laws in Elizabeth's time. It is also common knowledge that Thomas Goodlake assigns to Lord Orford (famed for his four-in-hand of red deer) credit for laying the foundation of modern coursing by his establishment of the Swaffham Club in 1776, which club's modern namesake courses over the same ground. Lord Orford is said to have crossed the greyhound of his day with the bulldog, and to have persevered with this somewhat unpromising experiment to the sixth or seventh generation when he confounded his opponents by producing the ancestor of the modern greyhound. 'The blood of the late Lord Orford's Dogs,' says Daniel, 'engrafted into those of Wiltshire and Yorkshire have turned out the best Greyhounds.' Czarina was one of Lord Orford's breed : she ran forty-seven courses without

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defeat: her son Claret was a famous dog, and Claret's son Snowball was 'supposed to be (taken for everything) the best greyhound that ever was': this, despite the fact that his brother, Major, always beat him.

The literature of coursing is curiously scant, having regard to the antiquity of the sport. That is a picturesque account of it given by Christopher North (1842). 'Old Kit' held organised coursing of small account by comparison with that to be enjoyed on the moors:

'What are your great, big, fat, lazy English hares, ten or twelve pounds and upwards, who have the food brought to their very mouth in preserves, and are out of breath with five minutes' scamper among themselves—to the middle-sized, hard-hipped, wiry-backed, steel-legged, long-winded mawkins of Scotland, that scorn to taste a leaf of a single cabbage in the wee moorland yardie that shelters them, but prey in distant fields, take a breathing every gloaming along the mountain-breast, untired as young eagles ringing the sky for pastime, and before the dogs seem not so much scouring for life as for pleasure, with such an air of freedom, liberty, and independence, as they fling up the moss and cock their fuds in the faces of their pursuers? Yet stanch are they to the spine—strong in bone and sound in bottom—see, see how *Tickler* clears that twenty-feet moss-hag at a single spang

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like a bird—tops that hedge that would turn any hunter that ever stabled in Melton Mowbray—and then, at full speed northward, moves as upon a pivot within his own length, and close upon his haunches, without losing a foot, off within a point of due South. A kennel! He never was and never will be in a kennel all his free joyful days. He has walked and run—and leaped and swam about—at his own will, ever since he was nine days old—and he would have done so sooner had he had any eyes. None of your stinking cracklets for him—he takes his meals with the family, sitting at the right hand of the Master's eldest son. He sleeps in any bed of the house he chooses, and, though no Methodist, he goes every third Sunday to church. That is the education of a Scottish greyhound—and the consequence is, that you may pardonably mistake him for a deer dog from Badenoch or Lochaber, and no doubt in the world that he would rejoice in a glimpse of the antlers on the weather gleam,

“Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trode,
To his hills that encircle the sea.”

This may be called roughing it—slovenly—course—rude—artless—unscientific. But we say no—it is your only coursing. . . .

‘But independently of spit, pot, and pan, what delight in even daundering about the home farm

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seeking for a hare? It is quite an art or science. You must consult not only the wind and weather of to-day, but of the night before—and of every day and night back to last Sunday, when probably you were prevented by the rain from going to church. Then hares shift the sites of their country seats every season. This month they love the fallow field—that, the stubble; this, you will see them, almost without looking for them, big and brown on the bare stony upland lea—that, you must have a hawk's eye in your head to discern, discover, detect them, like birds in their nests, embowered below the bunweed or the bracken; they choose to spend this week in a wood impervious to wet or wind—that, in a marsh too plashy for the plover; now you may depend on finding Madam at home in the sulks within the very heart of a bramble-bush or dwarf black-thorn thicket, while the squire cocks his fud at you from the top of a knowe open to blasts from all the airts; in short, he who knows at all times where to find a hare, even if he knew no one single thing else but the way to his mouth, cannot be called an ignorant man—is probably a better informed man in the long run than the friend on his right, discoursing about the Turks, the Greeks, the Portugals, and all that sort of thing, giving himself the lie on every arrival of his daily paper. We never yet knew an old courser (him of the

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Sporting Annals included) who was not a man both of abilities and virtues. But where are we?—at the Trysting-Hill Farmhouse, jocularly called Hunger-them-Out.

‘Line is formed, and with measured steps we march towards the hills—for we ourselves are the schoolboy, bold, bright, and blooming as the rose—fleet of foot almost as the very antelope—Oh! now, alas! dim and withered as a stalk from which winter has swept all the blossoms—slow as the sloth along the ground—spindle-shanked as a lean and slippered pantaloon!

“O heaven! that from our bright and shining years
Age would but take the things youth heeded not!”

An old shepherd meets us on the long sloping rushy ascent to the hills—and putting his brown withered finger to his gnostic nose, intimates that she is in her old form behind the dike—and the noble dumb animals, with pricked-up ears and brandished tail, are aware that her hour is come. Plash, plash, through the marsh, and then in the dry furze beyond you see her large dark-brown eyes—soho, soho, soho—halloo, halloo, halloo—for a moment the seemingly horned creature appears to dally with the danger, and to linger ere she lays her lugs on her shoulder, and away, like thoughts pursuing thoughts—away fly hare and hounds towards the mountain.

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‘Stand all still for a minute—for not a bush the height of our knee to break our view—and is not that brattling burst up the brae “beautiful exceedingly,” and sufficient to chain in admiration the beatings of the rudest gazer’s heart? Yes, of all beautiful sights—none more, none so much so, as the miraculous motion of a four-footed wild animal, changed at once, from a seeming inert sod or stone into flight fleet as that of the falcon’s wing! Instinct against instinct, fear and ferocity in one flight! Pursuers and pursued bound together in every turning and twisting of their career, by the operation of two headlong passions! Now they are all three upon her—and she dies! No! glancing aside, like a bullet from a wall, she bounds almost at a right angle from her straight course—and, for a moment seems to have made good her escape. Shooting headlong one over the other, all three, with erected tails, suddenly bring themselves up—like racing barks when down goes the helm, and one after another, bowsprit and boom almost entangled, rounds the buoy and again bears up on the starboard tack upon a wind—and in a close line, heel to heel, so that you might cover them all with a sheet—again, all open-mouthed on her haunches, seem to drive, and go with her over the cliff. We are all on foot—and pray what horse could gallop through among all these quagmires, over all the hags in these peat-mosses, over all

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the water-cressy, and puddocky ditches, sinking soft on hither and thither side, even to the two-legged leaper's ankle or knee—up that hill on the perpendicular strewn with flint-shivers—down those loose hanging cliffs—through that brake of old stunted birches with stools hard as iron—over that mile of quaking muir where the plover breeds—and—finally—up, up, up, to where the dwarfed heather dies away among the cinders, and in winter you might mistake a flock of ptarmigan for a patch of snow. The thing is impossible—so we are all on foot—and the fleetest keeper that ever footed it in Scotland shall not in a run of three miles give us sixty yards. “Ha! Peter, the wild boy, how are you off for wind?”—we exultingly exclaim in giving Red-jacket the go-by on the bent. But see, see, they are bringing her back again down the Red Mount—glancing aside, she throws them all three out—yes, all three, and few enow too, though fair play be a jewel, and ere they can recover, she is ahead a hundred yards up the hill. There is a beautiful trial of bone and bottom! Now one, and then another, takes almost imperceptibly the lead; but she steals away from them inch by inch—beating them all blind—and suddenly disappearing, heaven knows how, leaves them all in the lurch. With outlolling tongues, hanging heads, panting sides, and drooping tails, they come one by one down the steep, looking

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somewhat sheepish, and then lie down together on their sides, as if indeed about to die in defeat. She has carried away her cocked fud unscathed for the third time, from Three of the Best in all broad Scotland—nor can there any longer be the smallest doubt in the world, in the minds of the most sceptical, that she is—what all the country side had long known her to be—a Witch. . . .’

One of the best coursing essays ever written is that wherein ‘The Druid’ describes *Master M’Grath’s* second Waterloo Cup in 1869.

‘The morning finds us at Lynn’s once more, and the cards of the day show that *Master M’Grath* has been drawn with *Borealis*. The latter has been winning a good stake at Lytham, but “the talent” have taken her measure well, as 25 to 1 can be got about her for the Cup, and it is only 6 to 1 against the black. All is life and activity among the coursers. They are buttoning on leggings, and lighting pipes, and driving bargains with hansoms and coaches, into which they mount, looking like very jolly Cromwellian pike-men, with their long mahogany-coloured leaping poles. The route lies principally by the dock side, and its dusky forest of masts, till we strike rather more inland at Formby, where the greyhound trainers keep their charges. Seven or eight miles bring us within sight of the Altcar plains at last. On the left are interminable sand banks, tenanted by coneys and vitriol works; while ditches of all

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degrees, high mounds, and engine houses help to break the dreary Altcar dead level of grass and fallows, which look as if they had merely been pared. Be that as it may, they are full of "fur," and during one portion of the meeting, *Hard Lines*, Mr. J. Hole's black dog, got among a wandering troop of nearly a hundred hares, and didn't know what it meant. There are a few trees, and there is a conventicle-looking church in the distance, but even when the sun is out, it looks quite a joyless land, inhabited by the descendants of Mat o' the Marsh.

'There is life enough at the North End Farm, where the carriages make their halt, and the official card-seller sets up his basket under the lee of a barn. He is wise in his generation, as if he once faced the open there would be a rush at him, and like good card-sellers before him, he might be pressed into the ditch. The trainers are here in great force, each with his champion in hand, or snugly ensconced in a dog-van. *Speculation* (late *Red Robin*) occupies the front seat of a cab, and a large wisp of straw is spread artistically over the front window, for fear any minute draught may visit his honoured head too roughly. Alas! it is of no avail, as *India Rubber* challenges him to the slips ere two hours more are over, and wins a good trial cleverly at his expense. Some of the dog carriages are drawn in great style by three donkeys, but many

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trainers discard them altogether. *Light Cavalry* is at the ditch side straining for the fray, and we also mark the dingy face of *Bethell* (by *Boanerges* from *Mischief*), own brother to *Bab* at the Bowster, and the grey features of *Ewesdale*, not a remarkable dog in his day, but now of good repute among greyhounds at the stud. The trainers are a motley lot as regards dress; but the real Altcar thing is supposed to be a sort of seal-skin cap, with lappets for the ears, and a green coat, with mother-of-pearl buttons about half the circumference of a cheese-plate. What Lancashire Witch can stand against that?

‘It is barely five minutes past ten, and up comes Mr. Warwick, the judge, in his scarlet coat and blue bird’s-eye, to judge for the ninth year in succession. Another bit of scarlet shows that Tom Raper, the slipper, has also stripped to his work. He looks very worn in the face with so hard a life, but the heart is as good and the legs are almost as nimble as ever. We look in vain for old Will Warner, but we are told that he has “turned it up.” The crowd thickens fast, and as far as the eye can reach towards Formby, they come steadily tramping on. The vehicles alone seem to stretch for more than half a mile in the line of march, and half of them are in the commissariat service, and laden with pies, and cheese, and liquors. Many visitors carry their own little polished drink barrel slung across

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their shoulders, and those who have the office look out, when luncheon time is nigh, for the hospitable red flag with the white star in the centre, which flies as a token at the top of a private omnibus from Lytham. Half the point of the meet of Northend was lost this year by the absence of the house party from Croxteth, and we might well long to see the four dark chestnuts dash up in the green drag as of yore, with the Earl of Sefton on the box. It seems but the other day that his father was riding off across country to Croxteth, to tell of his *Sackcloth's* victory.

'The march of the cracks round and round the farm paddock is one of the most beautiful sights. We have noted there—before the first couple were called, and the hare-boys (looking like tortoises erect) started on their march—the shining bridle of Streamer, the dark black of the great bitch corps—*Spider*, old *Belle* of the Village, *Rebe*, and *Reliance*; the blue of *Goodareena*; the fawn of *Sea Rock*; the red of *Monarch* and *Sea Girl*; while the brindle on the tail deftly told the difference between the flying whites of Liverpool, Mr. Spinks's *Sea Pink* and *Sea Foam*.

'A quarter past ten, and there is no time to lose; off comes Mr. Warwick's overcoat, and he mounts a good-looking grey. *Requiem* and *Morning Dew* are in the slips, but three hares get away before *Raper* gets a slip to his mind. It was a bad begin-

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ning, as both got unsighted before they had been long at it, and then *Requiem* went on with the hare by herself, and had such a severe single-hander, that the hearts of her backers die within them, and any hopes of pulling off 33 to 1 become a vanishing fraction. Then every eye is on *Lobelia*, as this rare granddaughter of *Canaradzo* comes out bright and beautiful, and not one mass of diachyplon plaster as she was last year. She hung in the slips a little, and then she warmed up and raced past *Exactly* in the brilliant style of her *Trovatore* days, and made a masterly kill. The Lancashire men may well shout for her after such a performance, and wish her well through the Cup. Now the drain jumping begins, and sorely tests the limbs that are stiff with "age's frost." Some bound over them in their stride like antelopes, or use the comfortable pole; others go at them with faces indicative of resignation and agony combined, and if a foot slips there is a roar like a salvo of artillery down the line. Occasionally a stout gentleman determines, rather than be left behind, to jump or perish in the attempt. He is gravely advised by some athlete to "pull himself together," whatever that process may be; he balances his arms, rushes, regardless of family considerations, at his works, funks, towers, is deposited with a splash, and ignominiously crawls out up the opposite bank. What comfort is it to him to be told to "put on more powder" when all is over, and he is wet

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up to his middle? A policeman in a helmet has a most tremendous reception when he jumps short ; but still there is not the fun there was when fewer people came, and poor John Jackson, in his lusty manhood, went striding and shouting, with his short stick in his hand, over the ditches, and when Jem Mace, or Joe Goss, were putting on condition after that fashion.

‘ And so the courses go on, and at last the crowd, some six or seven thousand strong, line the high embankment on both sides of a field where *Patent* ran one year. A sort of nervous thrill goes through them when a beautiful worked course has been run in full view between *Jolly Green* and *Innkeeper*. “One more bye, and then the crack comes out,” is the key to it. They are so closely packed that it is difficult, as you stand, to see right along the bank. In a minute a roar is heard at the distance, and we know that the black, *Master M’Grath*, is coming. Nearer and nearer, and the shout is taken up all along the line, as when the St. Leger horses reach the Intake turn, and the last struggle begins. Mr. Warwick tears along at full gallop on the grey, almost level, and twenty yards to the right of the hare, in order to be handy at the finish ; and then comes the black dog with the white breast and the white neck mark, going like a whirlwind twelve lengths ahead of *Borealis*. She looks, in fact, like a mere terrier scuffling after him, and when she did

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get up, the Irish dog had raced right into his hare, and flung it half dead into the air. Raper said that he had never seen a greyhound go so fast, and the Cup seemed to be over. Then *Woman in Black* delights the Irish division once more, and *Ask Mamma* and *Charming May* ran as sweetly as ever. Except *Lady Lyons*, there was nothing more beautiful than "*May*" on the field. *Ghillie Callum* then gives the Scotchmen a good turn, and fastens on his hare, when he kills so savagely that they are obliged to bite his ear before he will resign it. Two other dogs cannot settle the knotty point, and so they dash away and jump a wide ditch, holding the hare between them. Luncheon succeeds, and the coursers are found in carriages, or on the top of them, on the grass, or sitting on a rail "transacting business" with hampers and parcels which would have done Epsom no discredit. Even a horse and gig rolling in a ditch doesn't rouse them. They were a singularly quiet and well-behaved crowd, and though the stewards had left them pretty nearly to their own devices, in despair of handling so many, they encroached but a very few yards. It was a fine, genial day, and each man seemed bent on good-humoured enjoyment, and an oath or coarse word was almost unheard.

'Luncheon over, and we got into position for the last time that day, and all along the Engine-house Meadows. For some time it was hopeless to begin,

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as "fur" was too plentiful; but at last they came off the fallows by singles, and *Master M'Grath* was slipped once more. There was no enthusiasm over this course. On he sped raking lengths away from *Hard Lines*, but after turning his hare he tumbled and got shaken, as he put in no really good work afterwards, and *Hard Lines* killed. The crowd were quite still and disappointed, but there were some cheers as Lord Lurgan, who loves the sport dearly, and boasted a huge pair of leggings, walked up to him to pat him.

'Such was the opening day, and the next night found the puppies all beaten off, and England and Ireland each with one, and Scotland with two champions. Ireland and Scotland fought it out at last, and Lord Lurgan's dog could only beat *Bab* about a length for speed, and get very little the best of the working. Perhaps two such flyers never met before, as the winner has never been beaten, and the loser, we believe, only once. Bonfires were lighted on Friday night on the hills near Belfast, to tell of the second Waterloo victory of their black dog. At Waterloo it created such enthusiasm in the bosom of one Celt, that having flung away his own hat, he rushed at Lord Lurgan, plucked off his lordship's wideawake, flung it wildly into the air, and kicked it when it came down again.'

We do not hear much of long courses nowadays.

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At the end of the eighteenth and early in the nineteenth century the Flixton meeting in Yorkshire was notable for the distances run. 'The *Flixton Hares*,' says Daniel, 'are so stout that the course is extended sometimes to the length of five and six miles: they are generally found on the side of a hill to the North, which they invariably ascend: at the top they have flat Down for three or four miles, and then a steep descent, after which they ascend a hill almost perpendicular: at the top is a large *whin* cover into which then hares beat many capital greyhounds, and perhaps it is the only place in England where a hare was ever seen to beat for *four miles over turf* a brace of the best greyhounds that could be produced.'

There is record of a course which took place in February 1798, when a pair of greyhounds belonging to Mr. James Courtall of Carlisle, killed a hare after running her seven miles: the hare, which was given 200 yards' law, was one that had often been coursed and had always easily beaten the greyhounds: she proved to be a comparatively small one, weighing 8 lbs. 11 oz.

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